

E

451

.L48

THE RAID OF JOHN BROWN
AT HARPER'S FERRY
AS I SAW IT

BY REV. SAMUEL VANDERLIP LEECH, D. D.



Class E 921

Book 123

Copyright N^o

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.



CAPT. JOHN BROWN

The Raid of John Brown at Harper's Ferry As I Saw It.

BY

REV. SAMUEL VANDERLIP LEECH, D. D.

*Author of "Ingersoll and The Bible," "The Three Inebriates," "From West
Virginia to Pompeii," "Seven Elements in Successful Preaching," Etc.*

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.

THE DESOTO
WASHINGTON, D. C.

1909

E451
.L48

Copyright by S. V. Leech, 1909.)

©CL A 251887

orig. Dec. 11, 1909.

THE RAID OF JOHN BROWN AT HARPER'S FERRY AS I SAW IT.

By REV. SAMUEL VANDERLIP LEECH, D. D.

THE town of Harper's Ferry is located in Jefferson County, West Virginia. Lucerne, in Switzerland does not excel it in romantic grandeur of situation. On its northern front the Potomac sweeps along to pass the national capital, and the tomb of Washington, in its silent flow towards the sea. On its eastern side the Shenandoah hurries to empty its waters into the Potomac, that in perpetual wedlock they may greet the stormy Atlantic. Across the Potomac the Maryland Heights stand out as the tall sentinels of Nature. Beyond the Shenandoah are the Blue Ridge mountains, fringing the westward boundary of Loudon County, Virginia. Between these rivers, and nestling inside of their very confluence, reposes Harper's Ferry. Back of its hills lies the famous Shenandoah Valley, celebrated for its natural scenery, its historic battles and "Sheridan's Ride." At Harper's Ferry the United States authorities early located an Arsenal and an Armory.

Before the Civil War, the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was constituted of five extensive districts in Virginia, stretching from Alexandria to Lewisburg and two great districts north of the Potomac, including the cities of Washington and Baltimore. The first three years of my ministerial life I spent on Shepherdstown, West Loudon and Hillsboro Circuits, being then all in Virginia. The State of West Virginia, now embracing Harper's Ferry, had not been organized by Congress as a war measure out of the territory of the mother State. Our Methodist Episcopal Church was theoretically an anti-slavery or-

ganization; but our Virginia and Maryland members held thousands of inherited and many purchased slaves. These were generally well-cared for and contented. Being close to the free soil of Pennsylvania they could have gotten there in a night had they wished to escape bondage, and then they could have easily reached Canada by that Northern aid, called the "Underground Railroad."

On the Sunday night when John Brown and his men invaded Virginia, I slept within a half mile of Harper's Ferry. That day I inaugurated revival services at my westward appointment, called "Ebenezer," in Loudon County two miles from Harper's Ferry. I was twenty-two years of age.

Three months before this raid Captain John Brown with two of his sons, Owen and Oliver, and Jeremiah G. Anderson, calling themselves "Isaac Smith and Sons" rented a small farm on the Maryland side of the Potomac four miles from Harper's Ferry. It was known as the "Booth-Kennedy Place." They also carried on across the mountains at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, a small hardware store managed by John H. Kagi. It was a depot for the munitions of war to be hauled to their Maryland farm. Another of Brown's men, John E. Cook, sold maps in the vicinity. He was a relative of Governor Willard of Indiana who secured the services of Hon. Daniel W. Voorhees, Attorney General of Indiana, to defend Cook at his after trial in Virginia. It was a time of profound national peace. Brown and his men represented themselves as geologists, miners and speculators. They had a mule and wagon with which to haul their boxes from Chambersburg. A wealthy merchant of Boston, Mr. George Luther Stearns, Chairman of the Massachusetts Aid Society had financed Brown's Kansas border warfare work, as well as his approaching Harper's Ferry raid.¹ Other Northern friends assisted. Brown had completed his preparations and collected his twenty-one helpers early in October, 1859. He had hidden in an old log cabin on the place 200 Sharpe's rifles, 13,000 rifle cartridges, 950 long iron pikes, 200 revolving pistols, 100,000 pistol caps, 40,000 percussion caps, 250 pounds of powder, 12 reams of cartridge paper and

other warlike materials. He organized his twenty-two men, himself included, into a "**Military Provisional Government**" to superintend the possible uprising of the slaves of Virginia. Thirteen of these men had engaged in border warfare in Kansas, in a successful effort to prevent Kansas from becoming a slave state. He, sixteen other white men and five negroes, constituted his entire Virginia army. The white men were Captain John Brown, Adjutant General John H. Kagi, Captains Owen Brown, Oliver Brown, Watson Brown, Aaron D. Stephens, John E. Cook, Dauphin Adolphus Thompson, George P. Tidd, William Thompson and Edwin Coppoc. The Lieutenants were Jeremiah G. Anderson, Albert Hazlitt and William Henry Leeman. The privates numbered eight. Three of them were white men and five were negroes. The whites were Francis J. Merriam, Barclay Coppoc and Steward Taylor. The negroes were Dangerfield Newby, Osborne P. Anderson, John A. Copeland, Sherrard Lewis Leary and Shields Green.

On Sunday morning, October 16th, 1859, Brown assembled his men and informed them that on that night their invasion into Virginia would take place. They took the oath of allegiance to the "Provisional Government." Adjutant General Kagi presented to each officer his commission.

The contents of the Armory, Arsenal and Hall's Rifle Works were daily open to public inspection. Captain John Brown well knew that Daniel Whelan was the only watchman, during the night time, at the Armory grounds. He believed that if he could secure the arms and ammunition in these buildings, carry them into the fastnesses of the adjacent mountains, and then unfurl the flag of freedom for all slaves who would flock to his standard, the result would be a general uprising of the negro population throughout the border states. A more idiotic and senseless theory never entered an American mind. In the superlative degree it was unreasonable and ridiculous. I personally know of the general loyalty of the slaves to their masters in that locality, at that period in our national history. Federal generals were astonished at the devotion of the negroes to their masters

everywhere in the South after the war had begun. This was especially true along the border states. But John Brown—honest, enthusiastic and intensely fanatical on the slavery question—issued his commands. On this Sunday he assigned to each his earliest work. Captain Owen Brown, Barclay Coppoc and Francis J. Merriam were to remain at the farm to guard the arms and ammunition. Hence only nineteen left the Kennedy farm. They were to walk down the river road on the Maryland side to the Maryland end of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad bridge. The Virginia end was close to the depot, hotel, Armory and the Arsenal. Captain John Brown was to ride in the wagon with the necessary guns, pistols and tools. Captains Cook and Tidd were to go in advance and cut the telegraph wires on the Maryland side. Captain Stephens and Adjutant General Kagi were to capture Mr. Williams, the guard of the bridge. Captain Watson Brown and Taylor were to hold up the passenger train due from the west at 1:40 A. M. It would be bound for Washington and Baltimore. Captain Oliver Brown and Thompson were to hold the bridges spanning the two rivers. Captain Dauphin Adolphus Thompson and Lieutenant Anderson were to hold the first building in the Armory grounds popularly known afterwards as “John Brown’s Fort.” It was the engine house where Brown held his most distinguished prisoners. From the portholes of it that they made after his entrance, his men did their final fighting. Captain Coppoc and Lieutenant Hazlitt were to hold the Arsenal outside and opposite the Armory gates. Adjutant General Kagi and Copeland were to seize and retain Hall’s Rifle Works. They were half of a mile up the western shore of the Shenandoah. Captain Stephens, and such men as he might select, were to go out to the home of Colonel Lewis W. Washington, the grand nephew of General George Washington, and bring him and some of his adult male slaves, to the engine house. They were also to secure the swords presented to General George Washington by Frederick the Great and by General Lafayette. For this object Stephens selected as his helpers Captains Tidd and Cook and privates Leary, Green and Anderson. Brown

made the raid at 11:30 that night. Mr. Williams the bridge guard was captured by Stephens and Kagi. The watchman at the Armory, Daniel Whelan, refused Brown and his men admission to the grounds. They broke the locks with tools, captured Whelan, and took possession of the Armory and also of the Arsenal outside. The following prisoners were brought in early on Monday and placed in the engine house: Jesse W. Graham who was master workman, Colonel Lewis W. Washington, Terance Byrne, John M. Allstadt, John Donohue, who was clerk of the railroad company; Benjamin F. Mills, the master armorer; Armstead M. Ball, the master machinist; Archibald M. Kitzmiller, assistant superintendent; Isaac Russell, a Justice of the Peace; George D. Shope, of Frederick and J. Bird, Arsenal armorer. The white prisoners were to be held as hostages and the blacks were to be armed and placed in Brown's army. Cook and Tidd evidently mistrusted their surroundings. During the night they made their way back to the farm and hastily escaped into Pennsylvania. Captain Watson Brown and Taylor held up the train bound for Baltimore, detaining it for three hours. The colored porter of the depot, Shepherd Hayward, went out on the bridge to hunt for Williams. He was brutally shot by one of Brown's bridge guards. Hayward managed to crawl to the baggage room where he died at noon on Monday. Dr. John Starry dressed his wounds and ministered to his every want. The physician was under the impression that a band of train robbers had captured the depot. He told this to Mr. Kitzmiller before Kitzmiller's imprisonment. Captain E. P. Dangerfield, clerk to the paymaster, entered the grounds and was hustled into the engine house quite early in the morning. Numerous arriving workmen were imprisoned in an adjoining building. Colonel Washington said that fully sixty men were imprisoned by eight o'clock on Monday morning. The citizens were hearing of the situation. Newby and Green, negroes, were stationed at the junction of High and Shenandoah streets. Newby shot at and killed Captain George W. Turner, a graduate of West Point. Green shot and killed Mr. Thomas Boerley, a grocer. Dr. Claggett attended Boer-

ley, who also soon died. After the mulatto had shot Turner, a man named Bogert entered the residence of Mrs. Stephenson by a rear door. Having no bullet he put a large nail into his gun, went up stairs and shot Newby, the nail cutting his throat from ear to ear. He was also shot in the stomach by some one else. I saw him die, in great agony, with an infuriated crowd around him. About ten o'clock in the morning, armed citizens crossed the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers to prevent the escape by the bridges, or by water, of any of the raiders. Some walked down the Maryland river road and wounded Captain Oliver Brown on the bridge. He reached the engine house but soon died beside his father. Citizens seized the uninjured prisoner, Captain Thompson, and put him under guard at the Galt hotel. Captain Stephens tried to reach the hotel to propose, as he stated, terms of surrender. George Chambers wounded him, and then assisted him into the Galt hotel, where his wounds were dressed. About eleven o'clock in the morning the Jefferson Guards from Charlestown commanded by Captain J. W. Rowen arrived. A half hour passed and the Hamtramck guards under Captain V. M. Butler came to the Ferry. They were followed by the Shepherdstown Mounted Troop commanded by Captain Jacob Reinhart. Then a military company from Martinsburg twenty miles distant reached the place, under the command of Captain Alburtis. Colonels W. R. Baylor and John T. Gibson took the general direction of the military affairs. Some soldiers crossed the Shenandoah along with armed citizens to intercept the four raiders Kagi, Leary, Leeman and Copeland, when they should be driven out of Hall's Rifle Works. These raiders also had in these works one of Colonel Washington's slaves pressed into their service. All of them ran out into the river to swim across to the Loudon County shore. All were shot to death in the river with the exception of Copeland. He threw up his hands and surrendered. During the excitement Hazlitt and the negro Anderson left the Arsenal and, undetected, escaped into Pennsylvania. Early in the morning Captain Owen Brown, Barclay Coppoc and Merriam had deserted the Kennedy farm

and gone north. Thus seven of the twenty-two men fled to the North. Cook and Hazlitt were captured. They were returned to Virginia, tried and executed.

By 2 o'clock P. M., the town and hills swarmed with militia and citizens. Brown had barricaded the engine house doors with the engine and reel. Inside were Captains John Brown and his son Watson; also Captain Oliver Brown, who was soon dead; Shields Green, Captain Edwin Coppoc, Lieutenant Jeremiah G. Anderson, Captain Dauphin Adolphus Thompson and ten white prisoners. The numerous prisoners, mostly workmen, in the adjoining structure had all escaped from the grounds, Brown having no port-holes on that side of his fort. The militia were afraid to fire into the port-holes for fear of killing some of the prominent prisoners. About 4 o'clock the Mayor, Mr. Fontaine Beckham, aged sixty years, who was also station agent of the railroad company, went out on the platform unarmed. He was shot dead by the negro Shields Green. Captain Watson Brown in the engine house received his death wound soon afterwards. Mayor Beckham was very much beloved by the people. A number of citizens hurried into the hotel and brutally seized Captain Thompson, threw him over the wall into the Potomac and riddled him with bullets. Mrs. Foulke of the hotel, and her colored porter, went to the platform and brought in the dead body of the Mayor.

As night was settling on the excited city a military company from Winchester, Virginia, commanded by Captain B. B. Washington, arrived by a Shenandoah Valley train. Shortly thereafter a Baltimore and Ohio railroad train brought several companies of soldiers from Frederick, Maryland. They were commanded by Colonel Shriver. Soon several independent companies from Baltimore, accompanied by the Second Light Brigade, arrived under the general command of General Charles C. Edgerton. Colonel Robert E. Lee of the United States army, overtook these troops at Sandy Hook, a mile and a half below the Ferry on the Maryland side. He had come from Washington with several companies of ma-

rines. He was accompanied by Lieutenant J. E. B. Stuart, afterwards a famous Confederate Cavalry General; also by Major Russell and by Lieutenant Israel Green, who died several months ago in the West. All were regular army officers. Colonel Lee regarded it as unwise to attack the engine house that night, fearing that Colonel Lewis W. Washington or other prisoners might be killed. Early in the morning he sent Lieutenant J. E. B. Stuart, who had once held Brown as a prisoner in Kansas, to demand an immediate and unconditional surrender. Brown refused to trust himself and men to the United States officers. About this time Colonel Robert E. Lee got within range of Captain Coppoc's rifle. Prisoners said that Mr. Graham knocked the muzzle aside. Lee's life was saved. Had he been then killed who knows that the battles of Antietam, Gettysburg, and the final conflicts north of the Appomattox would have ever been fought? On the Confederate side no abler general or more magnificent man, ever sat on a saddle than Robert E. Lee. He was the son of "Light Horse Harry Lee," a brave Major General of the Revolutionary War. He was the father of William Henry Fitzhugh Lee, who became a Major General of the Confederate forces of Virginia, at a later date. General Robert E. Lee made a brilliant record in the Mexican war as Chief Engineer of the United States army. After surrendering his decimated army to General Ulysses S. Grant, at Appomattox, he accepted the political situation with dignity. He became President of the Washington University at Lexington, Virginia. The South lavished on him every possible honor. During the late summer the Virginia legislature placed in the National Hall of Fame, at the United States Capitol, two fine statues of two representative men of their state. One was the statue of General George Washington; the other that of General Robert E. Lee.

By the advice of Colonel Lewis W. Washington all of Brown's prisoners mounted the fire engine and the reel carriage and lifted up their hands when the attack began. Three marines undertook to batter down the doors with heavy

sledge hammers. They were not successful. Then twelve marines struck the doors with the end of a strong ladder. They opened. Lieutenant Green entered first of all amidst a shower of bullets. Discovering Brown reloading his rifle he sprang on him with his sword and cut his head and stomach. The raider Captain Anderson rose to shoot Green. A marine named Luke Quinn ran his bayonet through him. Another raider shot Luke Quinn who soon died. Two other marines were wounded. I saw Captains Anderson and Watson Brown as they lay dying on the grass after their capture. The dead body of Captain Oliver Brown lay beside them. Captain Watson Brown had been dying for sixteen hours. Captain John Brown, bleeding profusely, and Captain Stephens from the hotel, were carried into the paymaster's office. Brown's long grey beard was stained with wet blood. He was bare headed. His shirt and trousers were grey in color. His trousers were tucked into the top of his boots. Captain Coppoc and the negro Green were also taken prisoners. They were not wounded.

As Brown lay on the floor of the paymaster's office he was very cool and courageous. Governor Henry A. Wise, United States Senator J. M. Mason of Virginia and Honorable Clement L. Vallandigham of Ohio plied him with many questions. To all he gave intelligent and fearless replies. He refused to involve his Northern financiers and advisers. He took the entire responsibility on himself. He told Governor Wise that he, Brown, was simply "An instrument in the hands of Providence." He said to some newspaper correspondents and others: "I wish to say that you had better—all you people of the South—prepare for a settlement of this question. You may dispose of me very easily. I am nearly disposed of now. But this question is yet to be settled—this negro question I mean. The end is not yet." Before thirteen months had passed one of the greatest Americans of any century, Abraham Lincoln, had been elected President of the United States; the Republican party was for the first time dominating national affairs and, soon there-

after, the Civil War was begun which culminated in the physical freedom of every slave in this Republic.

On Wednesday Captains John Brown, Stephens and Coppoc, along with Copeland and Green, were removed to the county jail at Charlestown, ten miles south of Harper's Ferry. Being acquainted with the jailor, Captain John Avis, I was permitted to visit Brown on one occasion. Captain Aaron D. Stephens was lying on a cot in the same room. I was told that Brown had ordered out of his room a Presbyterian minister named Lowrey when he had proposed to offer prayer. He had also said to my first colleague, Rev. James H. March, "You do not know the meaning of the word Christianity. Of course I regard you as a gentleman, but only as a **heathen** gentleman." I was advised to say nothing to him about prayer. He had told other visitors that he wanted no minister to pray with him who would not be willing to die to free a slave. I was not conscious that I was ready for martyrdom from Brown's standpoint. I have never been anxious to die to save the life of any body. My life is as valuable to me and my family as any other man's is to him and his family. But young as I was I hated American slavery. I was a "boy minister" of a great anti-slavery denomination of Christians. For more than a century the Methodist Episcopal Church has carried in its Disciplines its printed testimony against slavery. It is to-day the largest fully organized anti-slavery society on earth. I would have gladly offered prayer in Brown's room at Charlestown if an honorable opportunity had been afforded.

At his preliminary examination before five justices, Colonel Davenport presiding, Brown said: "Virginians! I did not ask for quarter at the time I was taken. I did not ask to have my life spared. Your governor assured me of a fair trial. If you seek my blood you can have it at any time without this mockery of a trial. I have no counsel. I have not been able to advise with any one. I know nothing of the feelings of my fellow prisoners and am utterly unable to attend to my own defense. If a fair trial is to be allowed there are mitigating circumstances to be urged. But, if we

are forced with a mere form, a trial for execution, you might spare yourselves that trouble. I am ready for my fate."

Two very able Virginia attorneys were assigned as a matter of State form as counsel for Brown. They were Honorable Charles J. Faulkner of Martinsburg, afterwards United States Envoy Extraordinary to France, and Judge Green, Ex-Mayor of Charlestown. The county grand jury indicted Brown on three separate charges: first, conspiracy with slaves for purposes of insurrection; second, treason against the commonwealth of Virginia; third, murder in the first degree. Mr. Faulkner withdrew from the case and Mr. Lawson Botts took his place. Mr. Samuel Chilton a learned lawyer of Washington, D. C., and Judge Henry Griswold of Ohio, another distinguished attorney, volunteered their services as counsel for John Brown and were accepted. Some of Brown's friends sent an excellent young lawyer named George H. Hoyt from Boston, as additional counsel. These attorneys made an able defense, whatever may have been their private opinion as to Brown's guilt or innocence. The prosecuting attorney for the State of Virginia was Andrew Hunter, an exceptionally brilliant orator and able lawyer. He was a courtly and commanding speaker. He was gifted with a rich and powerful voice. After the indictment of Brown by the court of justices, the prosecuting attorney of Jefferson county, Mr. Charles B. Harding left the prosecution almost exclusively to Mr. Andrew Hunter, who represented the State. So too, after the arrival of Brown's chosen outside counsel, Judge Green and Mr. Lawson Botts withdrew, in good taste, from his defense.

At the regular trial Brown's counsel requested a postponement on account of the prisoner's health. But Dr. Mason, his physician, attested the physical ability of his patient to undergo the strain. The State was spending almost a thousand dollars a day for military guards and other items. When Brown's counsel presented telegrams from his relatives asking for delay until they could forward proofs of his insanity, Brown said, "I will say, if the court will allow me, that I look on this as a miserable artifice and trick of

those who ought to take a different course in regard to me if they take any at all. I view it with contempt more than otherwise. I am perfectly unconscious of insanity and I reject, so far as I am capable, any attempts to interfere in my behalf on that score."

On the last day of the trial, October 31st, after six hours of argument by Hunter, Chilton and Griswold, the jury delivered the following verdict: "Guilty of treason, and of conspiring and advising with slaves and others to rebel; and of murder in the first degree." On Wednesday, November the 2nd, he was brought into court to receive his sentence. The County Clerk, Robert H. Brown, asked: "Have you anything to say why sentence should not be passed on you?" Brown, leaning on a cane, slowly arose from his chair and with plaintive emphasis addressed Judge Parker as follows:

"I have, may it please the court, a few words to say. In the first place I deny everything but what I have all along admitted, the design on my part to free the slaves. I certainly intended to have made a clean thing of that matter as I did last winter when I went into Missouri and took slaves without the snapping of a gun on either side, moved them through the country and finally left them in Canada. I designed to have done the same thing again on a larger scale. That was all I intended. I never did intend murder or treason, or the destruction of property, or to excite or incite slaves to rebellion or to make insurrection. I have another objection and that is that it is unjust that I should suffer such a penalty. Had I interfered in the manner which I admit, and which I admit has been fairly proved, for I admire the truthfulness and candor of the greater portion of the witnesses who have testified in this case,—had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great; or in behalf of any of their friends, either father, mother, sister, brother, wife or children, or any of that class, and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right and every man in this court would have deemed it an act

worthy of reward rather than punishment. This court acknowledges as I suppose the validity of the law of God. I see a book kissed here which I suppose is the Bible, or at least the New Testament. That teaches me that all things, whatsoever I would that men should do to me I should do even unto them. It teaches me further to 'Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them.' I endeavored to act up to that instruction. I say that I am yet too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done, as I have always admitted freely I have done, in behalf of His despised poor was not wrong but right. Now if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel and unjust enactments, I submit. So let it be done.

"Let me say one word further. I feel entirely satisfied with the treatment I have received on my trial. Considering all the circumstances it has been more generous than I expected. But I feel no consciousness of guilt. I never had any design against the life of any person, nor any disposition to commit treason or excite slaves to rebellion or make any general insurrection. I never encouraged any man to do so but always discouraged any idea of the kind.

"Let me say a word in regard to the statements made by some of those connected with me. I hear it has been stated by some of them that I induced them to join me. But the contrary is true. I do not say this to injure them, but as regards their weakness. There is not one of them but joined me of his own accord and the greater part of them at their own expense. A number of them I never saw, and never had a word of conversation with, till the day they came to me and that was for the purpose I have stated. Now I am done."

Brown's statement was not exactly sustained by the facts. Why had he collected the Sharpe's rifles, the pikes, the kegs of powder, many thousands of caps and much warlike material at the Kennedy farm? Why did he and other

armed men, break into the United States Armory and Arsenal, make portholes in the engine house, shoot and kill citizens and surround their own imprisoned persons with prominent men as hostages? But everybody in the court house believed the old man when he said that he did everything with a solitary motive, the liberation of the slaves.

Judge Parker could, under his oath, do nothing else than to sentence him to be hung. He fixed the date for Friday, the second of December. Brown's counsel appealed to the Supreme Court of Virginia. Its five judges unanimously sustained the action of the Jefferson county court.

Brown was hung on the bright and beautiful morning of December 2nd at 11:15 o'clock. At his request Andrew Hunter wrote his will. He then visited his fellow prisoners who were all executed at a later date. He rode to his death between Sheriff Campbell and Captain Avis in a furniture wagon drawn by two white horses. He did not ride seated on his coffin as some of his chief eulogists have affirmed. The wagon was escorted to the scaffold by State military companies. No citizens were allowed near to the jail. Hence he did not kiss any negro baby as he emerged from his prison, as Mr. Whittier has described in a poem on the event and as artists have memorialized in paintings. The utter absurdity of such an incident occurring under such surroundings any Virginian will see. Avis, Campbell and Hunter publicly denied it. But the story will doubtless have immortality. In one of the companies of soldiers walked the actor John Wilkes Booth, the infamous assassin of Abraham Lincoln. At the head of the Lexington cadets walked Professor Thomas Jefferson Jackson, who became an able Confederate General and is best known to the world as "Stonewall Jackson." As the party neared the gallows Brown gazed on the glorious panorama of mountain and landscape scenery. Then he said: "This is a beautiful country." He wore a black slouch hat with the front tipped up. Reaching the scaffold the numerous State troops formed into a hollow square. Brown mounted the platform without trepidation. Standing on the drop he said to the

sheriff and his assistants: "Gentlemen! I thank you for your kindness to me. I am ready at any time. Do not keep me waiting." The drop fell and in ten minutes Dr. Mason pronounced him dead. That evening Mrs. Brown and her friends received the casket at Harper's Ferry and accompanied it to the old home at North Elba, N. Y. His funeral, as reported by the metropolitan papers, took place there six days after his execution. An immense concourse was in attendance. The conspicuous and brilliant orator, Wendell Phillips, delivered the address. He closed it with these words: "In this cottage he girded himself and went forth to battle. Fuller success than his heart ever dreamed of God had granted him. He sleeps in the blessings of the crushed and the poor. Men believe more firmly in virtue now that such a man has lived." Personally I remained in Virginia.

On the day that Brown was hung **Martyr Services**, as they were called, were held in many Northern localities. At Concord, Dr. Edmund Sears read a poem in which are these stanzas:

"Not any spot, six feet by two
Will hold a man like thee:
John Brown will tramp the shaking earth
From Blue Ridge to the sea
Till the strong angel comes at length
And opes each dungeon door;
And God's Great Charter holds and waves
O'er all the humble poor.

And then the humble poor may come
In that far distant day,
And from the felon's nameless grave
Will brush the leaves away:
And gray old men will point the spot
Beneath the pine tree's shade,
As children ask with streaming eyes
Where old John Brown was laid."

Before he was executed many threatening communications were received by the Virginia State and Jefferson County officers. Large numbers of E. C. Stedman's poem, entitled "John Brown of Ossawattamie," were scattered about Charlestown. One stanza reads as follows:

"But Virginians! Don't do it, for I tell you
that the flagon,
Filled with blood of Old Brown's offspring,
was first poured by Southern hands;
And each drop from Old Brown's life veins,
like the red gore of the dragon,
May spring up, a vengeful Fury, hissing through
your slave-worn lands:
And Old Brown,
Ossowattamie Brown,
May trouble you more than ever.
When you've nailed his coffin down."

Whether they be from the North or the South, fair-minded men, who are thoroughly conversant with the history of this raid, can hardly cherish any doubt concerning the turpitude of the invasion, the fairness of Brown's trial and the justice of his conviction and execution. He fell under the direction of a misguided conscience. The noble endowment that philosophers call conscience, that gives its verdicts as to the moral merit or demerit of actions and affections, was strangely warped in Brown's intense and brave character. The possession of this faculty of conscience is the massive foundation of all human responsibility. Illustrations of the moral enormities that a perverted conscience can perpetrate are manifold along the pages of sacred and secular history.

When Jesus looked down the aisles of the future, He said to His disciples that the men who would finally transfigure them into martyrs would murder them in the belief that they were rendering acceptable service to God.

Paul declared that he regarded himself as meeting the divine approval when he was persecuting and murdering the primitive Christians.

When the officers of the Spanish Inquisition saw the agonies of the victims who refused to renounce their religious creeds they joyfully exclaimed, "Let God be glorified."

Charles the Ninth of France said he was conscientious in ordering the Saint Bartholomew massacre that resulted in the murder in French cities of tens of thousands of Christian Huguenots.

The Bloody Queen, Mary Tudor, said she had a pure conscience when she sent to the scaffold the learned and gentle young Ex-Queen Lady Jane Grey. Thousands of criminals have sheltered their crimes in the temple of Conscience.

The trend of Brown's constant defence was that he obeyed his conscience. His lawless conduct, the death of many of his party and the murder of Virginia citizens gave him very little apparent intellectual unrest. He sowed to the wind and reaped the logical harvest, if it is the appropriate word, the whirlwind.

Brown's high Calvinism bordered on fatalism. Oliver Cromwell never believed more radically in the foreordination of all human actions than did he. When questioned concerning the failure of this invasion he replied: "All of our actions, even all of the follies that led to this disaster, were decreed to happen ages before the world was made." When Judge Russell visited him he said: "I know that the very errors by which my scheme was marred were decreed before the world was made. I had no more to do with the course I pursued than a shot leaving a cannon has to do with the spot where it shall fall."

It is when patriotic men read the story of "John Brown's Raid" by the torches of President Lincoln's early election, the Civil War and the Emancipation of all American slaves, that they seem to become blind to the terrible criminal features of the invasion and look only at the national results and the magnificent courage, benevolent motives and supreme self-sacrifice of this martyr. Multitudes of visionary men regard him as a divinely appointed John the Baptist raised up to usher in the day of physical freedom for every slave on American soil and their posterity to the end of time. They

claim that in this instance "The End has justified the Means." His raid made the North solid against the slave system and the South as solid against anti-slavery theories and agitators. Before the Brown raid the vote for John C. Fremont, the Republican candidate for President, was 1341000. James Buchanan had 496000 majority. The year after the raid Abraham Lincoln received 1886000 votes for President and had 491000 majority over Stephen A. Douglas, when the South voted for another Democrat. Fremont had 114 votes in the Electoral College. Lincoln had 180. Under his presidency the emancipation of every slave on the national soil took place. The nations of Europe learned for the first time the important lesson that the United States was able to maintain its national unity. This raid beyond question hastened in the Civil War. I have seen Federal regiments marching on to battle enthusiastically singing:

"John Brown's body lies a mould'ring in the grave,
But his soul is marching on."

A few weeks after Brown's execution Victor Hugo said, "What the South slew last December was not John Brown but slavery." His statement developed into a colossal historical truth. The great statesman, orator and senator, John J. Ingalls of Kansas, closed an oration with these remarkable words:

"Carlyle says that when any great change in human society is to be wrought God raises up men to whom that change is made to appear as the one thing needful and absolutely indispensable. Scholars, orators, poets, philanthropists, play their parts, but the crisis comes at last through some one who is stigmatized as a fanatic by his contemporaries, and whom the supporters of the systems he assails crucify between thieves or gibbet as a felon. The man who is not afraid to die for an idea is the most potential and convincing advocate.

"Already the great intellectual leaders of the movement for the abolition of slavery are dead. The student of the future will exhume their orations, arguments and state papers, as a part of the subterranean history of the epoch.

The antiquarian will dig up their remains from the alluvial drift of the period, and construe their relations to the great events in which they were actors. But the three men of this era who will loom forever against the remotest horizon of time, as the pyramids against the voiceless desert, or mountain peaks over the subordinate plains, are Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant and old John Brown of Ossowattamie."

Senator Ingalls well knew that Brown had no such intellectual massiveness, or splendid culture, as had Webster, Clay, Jefferson, Sumner, and many other eminent Americans. He referred to the majesty of personal achievements. From this standpoint men like Garibaldi, Morse, Harriman, Edison, Roosevelt and Cook, the Arctic explorer have been great. Brown's life was a perpetual sacrifice for the annihilation of American slavery. Very defective as a military leader he was always ready to do, dare and die to assist in this work. Even today tens of thousands of educated men regard him as a monomaniac concerning the abolition of slavery. For many years, in the state of Kansas, he had permitted his own life, and the life of each of his sons, to be in continual peril that they might assist in placing Kansas in the constellation of free States. Men like Gerrit Smith and John L. Stearns financed his schemes from their wealth. Men like Henry Ward Beecher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, George B. Cheever, William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips and Theodore Parker, delivered eulogies on Brown after he had been hung. They most eloquently denounced slavery from pulpits and platforms; but they lived in the limelight of oratorical popularity and flourished amidst luxurious ease. To Brown's immortal credit be it said that he gave domestic security, his humble fortune, his perillous work, the lives of his cherished sons and his own blood and life for the anti-slavery opinions that were anchored in his soul. His prison letters to many friends are full of intrepidity, submission to the divine providence and heroic anticipations of immortal blessedness. Ten minutes before he left his jail cell for the gallows he handed to a prison official a sheet of paper on which he had written these words: "I, John Brown, am

quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood, I had, as I now think, vainly flattered myself that without very much bloodshed it might be done."

His surpassing bravery and self-sacrificing candor profoundly impressed eminent Virginians. Governor Henry A. Wise said: "He is a bundle of the best nerves I ever saw, cut and thrust; and bleeding and in bonds. He is a man of clear head, of courage, fortitude and simple ingenuousness. He is cool, collected, indomitable; and it is but just to him to say that he was humane to his prisoners. He is a fanatic, but firm, and truthful and intelligent." Colonel Lewis W. Washington and Captain John E. P. Dangerfield bore testimony to his courage.

Brown's wonderful moral heroism became resplendent after Judge Richard Parker had sentenced him to death. Many of his letters to his friends, collected and published by Mr. F. B. Sanford, would have done honor to the pen of Paul. He was exultant from the standpoint of a happy spiritual experience and triumphant as he gazed beyond this mortal life. In one of his last letters he wrote these words: "I sleep as peacefully as an infant, or if I am wakeful glorious thoughts come to me entertaining my mind. I do not believe I shall deny my Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, in this prison or on the scaffold. But I should do so if I denied my principles against slavery." Surely he must have been sincere as he faced eternity.

As early as 1820 John Quincy Adams said of the overthrow of American slavery, "The object is vast in its compass, awful in its prospects and sublime and beautiful in its issues. A life devoted to it would be nobly spent or sacrificed." John Brown, along illegal and criminal lines, placed before the world such a life and death. He saw clearly what American statesmen of his period saw but dimly. Beyond all question he died as emphatically for the overthrow of slavery as Paul died for the honor of Christianity. Three of his favorite books were the life stories of men of great

achievements:— "The Life of Oliver Cromwell," "The Life of Marco Bozarris," and "The Life of William Wallace."

Some years ago, in an oration delivered at Harper's Ferry, the distinguished freedman and orator, the late Frederick Douglass, said: "If John Brown did not end the war that ended slavery he did at least begin the war that ended slavery. If we look over the dates, places and men for which this honor is claimed we shall find that not Carolina, but Virginia; not Fort Sumter, but Harper's Ferry and the United States Arsenal; not Major Anderson, but John Brown, began the war that ended American slavery and made this a free republic. Until this blow was struck the prospect was dim, shadowy and uncertain. The irrepressible conflict was one of words, votes and compromises. When John Brown stretched forth his arm the sky was cleared, the time for compromise was gone, the armed hosts stood face to face over the chasm of a broken Union and the clash of arms was at hand."

And let it be remembered that when Brown had told Douglass the details of his proposed invasion at Harper's Ferry, Douglass begged him to abandon his plans and assured him that they would end, as they did, in untold disaster.

The chief authors who have written concerning John Brown and his invasion were not in Virginia during the forty-four days intervening between the raid and his execution. They were destitute of any personal knowledge of the facts. They were bitter enemies of the South and most intense admirers of the intrepid man executed at Charlestown. Their narratives are replete with errors and contain much romance. They are, generally, saturated with misrepresentation of the Virginia people and are burdened with eulogistic apologies for Brown's conduct in Virginia. Because I was on the ground and saw things as they occurred; because I have kept in touch with Brown literature; and because I am in love with the Truth I believe that my story is worthy of public confidence.

I have known Virginians, personally, for over fifty years. My long career, as a minister of Christ, was begun among

them. They have not deserved the traduction Brown's eulogists have heaped on them. His unfortunate execution was the logical result of his criminal and bloody raid. The Virginia people have been noble in chivalry, bounteous in hospitality, sublime in kindness of heart and life and models of high social and moral purity.

Spartacus led the way for the destruction of Roman slavery. John Brown performed a similar service for the American slaves. He mingled in his strange character fanaticism and courage—eccentricity and a prophetic insight into future events—a warped conscience and a sublime martyr heroism. But whether in safety or peril, at home or in prison, in battle or on the scaffold, this mysterious man intensely cherished the conviction that Joanna Baillie imbedded into poetry:

“The strength of man sinks in the hour of trial,
But there doth live a power that for the battle
Girdeth the weak.”

NOV 29 1909

1 COPY. DE. TO CAT. DIV

NOV 29 1909



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 899 126 6

